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SECUNDARIA Y BACHILLERATO**

# **The Effects of Collaborative vs. Individual Work on EFL Written Texts: Aspects of Quality and Engagement**

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**Abstract:**

This paper presents a study which analyses the effects of collaborative working in the quality of EFL students' written text and in EFL students' engagement when writing texts. This paper compares two sets of short stories written in English in class by fourth year secondary students (ages 15-17) at a public bilingual high school of Madrid, Spain. The present study included a total of 40 participants, 20 of whom worked individually and 20 of whom worked collaboratively in pairs. Participants were first taught some guidelines about how to write a short story. Then, each student/pair was asked to write one short story. A total of 30 short stories were collected (20 written individually and 10 written in pairs). The quality of EFL students' written text was determined by a quantitative analysis that included organization, fluency, complexity and accuracy. Participants' engagement when writing texts was determined by a small qualitative study based on observation during data collection. This paper concludes that that collaborative partner work has various positive implications for writing in the EFL classroom, especially in terms of organization, accuracy and EFL student's engagement when written texts.

**Key words:** teaching English as foreign language, collaborative writing, organization, fluency, complexity, accuracy, engagement.

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## **1. Introduction**

This paper provides comparative analysis of individual and pair written responses to a narrative task for the purpose of exploring to what extent collaborative writing affects the production of written texts. The written responses analyzed in this paper were collected from students in the fourth year of secondary school (ages 15-17) at a public bilingual high school in Madrid, Spain. The forty participants go to two different groups of fourth of ESO (twenty students in each group) and both groups belong to the Bilingual Program. This means that all the participants have five hours of English Language per week (one hour each day) and, besides, they are taught in English the subjects of Physical Education and Technology (two hours of each subject per week) (Orden 3331/2010, 2010). The two central goals of this paper are to identify how collaborative writing affects the quality of EFL students' written text and how it may affect EFL students' engagement when writing texts.

In recent years, the use of pair and group work has been promoted in language classrooms (Shehadeh, 2011 & Fernández Dobao, 2012). Moreover, different studies that have been carried out on collaborative working have shown a large number of benefits that pair and group work has in second language (L2) learning and teaching. Al Ajmi and Ali (2014), for example, present an overview of some of the most important positive outcomes of collaborative writing, which have been described by different authors:

Wigglesworth and Storch (2009) highlight how collaborative writing can provide learners with the experience they need for their future education or for the workplace. Many research projects conducted on CW emphasise its significance in language learning (Batstone, 2010; Ellis, 2003; Garcia Mayo, 2007; Lantolf, 2000; Shehadeh & Coombe, 2010); that is, CW can mediate the construction of linguistic knowledge (Swain, 2010), it helps students to recognize language structures (Kuiken & Vedder, 2002) and it enables students to develop reflective thinking which results in greater

awareness and understanding of the intended audience (Bruffee, 1993) (Al Ajmi et al., 2014, p. 1).

Mercer (2013) also points out that collaborative work is beneficial for learners and he states that working collaboratively is more effective and productive for students than working individually. Mercer (2013) explains that, although students may adopt different roles and may contribute in different ways with their group due to the fact that each student may have a different level of English, as well as different strong and weak skills, the process of working collaboratively is beneficial for all members in a group since collaboration engages students to express their opinions and respect others' opinions, it fosters negotiation and it engages students to share their knowledge.

The present study, as mentioned above, set out to focus on both how collaborative working affects the quality of EFL students' written text in terms of organization, fluency, complexity and accuracy and learners' attitude to pair work, which is analyzed in this paper in terms of observed engagement during data collection.

## **2. Theoretical background**

Over the last two decades, collaborative working has become popular worldwide in many classroom contexts (Shehadeh, 2011). Different authors have stated that the use of pair and small group activities in the L2 classroom has been supported by both theoretical and pedagogical arguments (see, for example, Storch, 2005; Shehadeh, 2011 & Fernández Dobao, 2012). According to Storch (2005), the use of collaborative working in the L2 classroom is, from a theoretical perspective, supported by the social constructivist perspective of learning, which is based on the work of Vygotsky (1978). Storch (2005) explains that Vygotsky emphasises the importance of society in the acquisition of knowledge since, according to him,

we need each other in order to learn and to transmit what we know, being usually adults (who are considered to know more) the ones who help children to acquire their same knowledge by guiding them and providing them the appropriate input so that children can understand the messages they receive at the same time they increase their knowledge:

According to Vygotsky, human development is inherently a socially situated activity. A child's (novice) cognitive development arises in social interaction with a more able member of society. The more able member (expert), by providing the novice with the appropriate level of assistance, stretches the novice beyond their current level towards their potential level of development. Such assistance is now commonly referred to in the literature as scaffolding. However, as a number of researchers have shown (e.g., Donato, 1994; Storch, 2002), scaffolding can also occur among peers when working in group/pair work. Thus, from a social constructivist perspective, learners should be encouraged to participate in activities which foster interaction and co-construction of knowledge (Storch, 2005, pp. 153-154).

Thus, collaborative working is supported by the social constructivist perspective of learning since, if we learn in society and thanks to the interaction with the other members of society, making students work in pairs or groups and promoting interaction among students should be beneficial for them and for their development. Moreover, although teachers, as the most advantage members in the educational context, have this fundamental role explained by Vygotsky (1978) of assisting or scaffolding students during their acquisition of knowledge, this role can be also carried out by students themselves by letting them work collaboratively.

Regarding the pedagogical perspective, Storch (2005) points out that the use of collaborative working in the L2 classroom can be seen as an activity coherent with the communicative approach. This approach, which was a reaction against the traditional methods and the central role of grammar, consists of "doing things with words". It is centred on communicative competences and its basis is learning and teaching grammar inductively and



incidentally (Belchamber, 2007). The communicative approach, then, supports the use of collaborative working in the L2 classroom since, when students work in pairs or groups, they have to communicate real meaning in order to exchange their views and knowledge, reach to agreements, organize and distribute the work, etc., and, according to this approach, this is the way by which learning language comes. Moreover, in the communicative approach the teaching takes place in the target language, which provides students with more input in the L2 and more opportunities to use it (Storch, 2005).

Furthermore, also related to the pedagogical arguments that support collaborative working in the L2 classroom, pair and group work allow the teacher to leave some responsibility for the student themselves, which may help them to increase their autonomy under the security that working with others in small groups provides, since students (especially those with a lower level of English) may feel more comfortable and may participate more during small group discussions than during whole-class discussions (McDonough, 2004).

Focusing on collaborative writing, which is the central topic of analysis of this paper, teaching writing has become the focus of attention of different researches in recent years, something which has had a great impact in pedagogy (Manchón, 2011). Different studies have shown that writing is a potential tool for language development (Manchón, 2011). Williams (2008), for example, states that “it is increasingly apparent that the act of writing may (...) promote general proficiency in ways that have not always been acknowledged” (Williams, 2008, p.11). Other research have pointed out that teaching writing is beneficial for students since the process of learning to write does not only encourage students to use their procedural knowledge, but it also encourages students to check their grammar and spelling, it activates their background knowledge and it fosters responsiveness. Moreover, writing gives students

the responsibility of adapting their grammatical knowledge and organizing their ideas according to the different genres and to the different readers, as well as in order to achieve the actual purpose of the texts they write (Manchón, 2011).

Harris (1992) defines the process of writing collaboratively: “Although there has been some confusion in the use of ‘collaboration’ to refer both to collaborative writing and collaborative learning about writing, collaborative writing is now identified as writing involving two or more writers working together to produce a joint product” (Harris, 1992, p. 369). Such collaboration implies that the production of a text does not belong to a single learner but to all members in a pair or group, something which “may promote a sense of co-ownership and hence encourage students to contribute to the decision making on all aspects of writing: content, structure, and language” (Storch, 2005, p.154). In this way, collaborative work is beneficial for students since they may feel more engaged and may pay more attention and effort to the written task if they work in pairs or groups than if they work individually, an engagement which may result in the production a more elaborate and accurate text.

Storch (2005) decided to investigate the process, product and students’ reflections on collaborative writing since, before her study, the great majority of studies that had been carried out on collaborative working in the L2 classroom had examined “learners’ attitudes to group/pair work in general, rather than to the activity of collaborative writing” (Storch, 2005, p.155). Twenty three adult ESL students at a large Australian university participated in her study. Participants could choose between writing in pairs or individually, and the result was that eighteen participants decided to work in pairs whereas the other five participants chose to work individually. For her study, Storch compared texts produced by those who had worked individually with those who had worked in pairs. She analyzed the texts using quantitative and qualitative measures. Quantitative measures included measures of fluency, accuracy, and

complexity, which are the same measures used in the current study in order to analyse how collaborative working affects the quality of EFL students' written text. In her study, Storch found that "pairs produced shorter but better texts in terms of task fulfilment, grammatical accuracy, and complexity" (Storch, 2005, p. 153). Storch (2005) also asserts that, according to what different studies have demonstrated, collaborative writing not only fosters reflection, but also makes students pay attention to grammatical aspects, accuracy and discourse.

Participants involved in the study carried out by Storch (2005) were also asked to express their personal opinion and reflections on their experience of collaborative writing. Regarding this, Storch points out that "most students were positive about the experience, although some did express some reservations about collaborative writing" (Storch, 2005, p.153).

Another important benefit of collaborative writing pointed out by Merkle (2013) has to do with investing part of the large time required from the teacher by writing activities in fostering students' sense of responsibility and letting them adopt the role of the teacher. Since writing activities are these types of activities that require more time from the teachers (they have to prepare the activities, give feedback to students, correct and evaluate the texts produced by students, etc.). In this way, by making students work in pairs or groups, the responsibility of editing the text and providing feedback can be placed on the students themselves.

However, in order to make the most of collaborative working, the teacher has the responsibility of trying to establish balanced pairs or groups, that is, making students with a lower level of English and weaker writing skills work together with those students with a higher level and stronger writing skills. In this way, as Merkle (2013) points out, "although weaker students, in terms of English level and writing skills, may take a more passive role in

the process of constructing an academic paragraph response they are, nonetheless, taking part in writing a higher fluency text than had they worked individually” (Merkle, 2013, p.8). In this way, working together with a student with a higher level of English let another student with a lower level revise and expand his knowledge, since the student with a lower level is receiving immediate feedback from the other student at the same time that he is receiving input with a higher level of difficulty than if he worked alone, something which, according to Vygotsky (1978), is the best way for us to learn.

I now turn to measures of quality. In this field, the notions of complexity, accuracy and fluency are fundamental to this paper since these are the measures used in many prior studies in collaborative writing (see, for example, Storch, 2005; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009; Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki & Kim, 1998; Fernández Dobao, 2012) as well as in the present study in order to analyse how collaborative writing affects the quality of EFL students’ written text. Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki and Kim (1998), in their important meta-study, provide definitions for these three measures regularly used in the analysis of language error, development and overall proficiency:

We have defined fluency as the rapid production of language, accuracy as error-free production and complexity as the use of varied and sophisticated structures. When we measure fluency, we measure the observable outcome of automaticity of access, and when we measure accuracy or complexity, we are measuring the observable outcome of representation and restructuring (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998, p. 116).

The present study attempts to identify the relationship between collaborative writing and the increase in the quality of EFL students’ written text in terms of organization, fluency, complexity and accuracy, as well as the relationship between pair and group work and the increase of EFL students’ engagement when writing texts.

### **3. The present study**

#### **3.1. Objectives and research questions**

Given the apparent benefits of collaborative writing, I designed a small study in two EFL groups in fourth year of ESO at a bilingual high school of Madrid. The final intention of this study is trying to find out which are the best conditions for EFL students to work and to improve their capacities when writing texts in the EFL classroom.

#### Research Questions:

- 1) Does collaborative working increase the quality of EFL students' written text?
- 2) Does collaborative working increase EFL students' observed engagement when writing texts?

#### Research Hypotheses:

- 1) Students who work collaboratively obtain better results in terms of organization, fluency, complexity and accuracy in the production of written text than those who work individually. This difference is especially noticeable between a student with a lower level of English who works individually and another who works collaboratively with a student with a higher level.
- 2) Collaborative working increases EFL student's engagement when writing texts, encouraging students to pay more attention and effort to the written task.

#### **3.2. Methodology:**

##### **3.2.1. Context and participants**

In order to carry out the present study, I worked with forty students who study in a bilingual high school located in the south of Madrid. Students in this type of high schools

receive different input in English, especially in terms of quantity, depending on the modality in which they are. In accordance with the regulations established by the BOCM in the Orden 3331/2010 on 11 June 2010 by which the bilingual high schools in Madrid are regulated, the bilingual teachings must be organized in two different modalities: Bilingual Section and Bilingual Program. Students who are in the Bilingual Section have five hours of English Language per week (one hour each day) and can be taught all the curriculum subjects in English, except for Spanish language, Spanish Literature, Mathematics and a Third Language. On the other hand, students who are in the Bilingual Program have five hours of English Language per week (one hour each day) but can be only taught in English the subjects of Physical Education, Technology, Music and Citizenship Education.

All the participants that have been involved in the present study are students of English as a foreign language. They all are students in fourth year of ESO, which means that they are between fifteen and seventeen years old, since some of these students are repeaters. The forty participants go to two different groups of fourth of ESO (there are twenty students in each group). Both groups belong to the Bilingual Program, which means that all students have the same input in English. They have the corresponding five hours of English Language per week (one hour each day) and are taught in English the subjects of Physical Education and Technology (two hours of each subject per week). The mean level of English of the students in both groups is a B1/B2 level in English according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) (Council of Europe, 2001).

In order to carry out the study, the students in one of the groups worked individually (control group) whereas the students in the other group worked in pairs (experimental group). Given that both groups were well balanced in terms of number of students and their level of English, the decision of which group would work individually and which one would work in

pairs was made randomly. In order to make the most of collaborative working, I tried to establish balanced pairs, so the students with a lower level of English worked together with another student with a higher level (decision based on students' marks in English).

For the data analysis, a code was given to the students; participants who worked individually (control group) were numbered from 1 to 20 with an S at the front (S1, S2, S3...); participants who worked collaboratively in pairs (experimental group) were numbered from 1 to 10 with a P at the front (P1, P2, P3...).

Table 1.Participants

Participants					
CONTROL (Individual learners)			EXPERIMENTAL (Pairs)		
Participants	Grade	Hours of English	Participants	Grade	Hours of English
S1 S11 S2 S12 S3 S13 S4 S14 S5 S15 S6 S16 S7 S17 S8 S18 S9 S19 S10 S20	4 <sup>th</sup> ESO  B1/B2	5 hours of English Language per week (one hour each day) + 2 hours of Physical Education & 2 hours of Technology taught in English	P1 P2 P3 P4 P5 P6 P7 P8 P9 P10	4 <sup>th</sup> ESO  B1/B2	5 hours of English Language per week (one hour each day) + 2 hours of Physical Education & 2 hours of Technology taught in English

### 3.2.2. Data collection and instruments

In order to analyse the effects of collaborative working in comparison to individual working in the quality of EFL students' written text and in EFL students' engagement when writing texts two different types of analysis were carried out. Participants in both groups were

first taught some guidelines about how to write a short story. Then, each student in the control group and each pair in the experimental group was asked to write their own short story. A total of 30 short stories were collected (20 written individually and 10 written in pairs). The quality of EFL students' written text was determined by a quantitative study that included an analysis of organization, fluency, complexity and accuracy. Participants' engagement when writing texts was determined by a small qualitative study based on observation during data collection.

#### **3.2.2.1. Writing a short story**

Participants involved in the present study were given a narrative writing task. Since these students were preparing the First Certificate in English (FCE), the task was designed following the model (regarding the main parts that make up a story, number of words, etc.) of the short story which is part of the writing in the FCE, information that can be found in the following webpage: [http://www.examenglish.com/FCE/fce\\_writing.html](http://www.examenglish.com/FCE/fce_writing.html). The directions given to participants about how to write a short story, which were exactly the same for both groups, consisted of explaining students the different parts in which this type of text is divided and the elements that must appear in each part. Students were explained that they had to start their story with the setting, telling the reader the time and place where the story takes place. Then, they had to present the characters of the story. Once they had introduced the time, the place and the characters of the story, they had to develop the conflict or problem of the story according to the following scheme: rising action > climax > falling action. Finally, they had to tell the solution to the conflict at the end of their story.

Moreover, in order to scaffold students, both the control group and the experimental group discussed a model of a short story which had as main topic "crime and suspense" (see appendix 1). In this model, students were shown the structure they have to follow (setting >



rising action > climax > falling action > solution) and the elements they must include in their stories. After all this explanation, students in both groups were given thirty minutes to write their own short story, using also “crime and suspense” as main topic for their stories so that they could take some ideas from the model shown.

Once all the data was collected, and following the model of *corpus* design shown by Barrio Luis (2005), first an electronic format of the texts was created (see appendices 2 and 3). As Barrio Luis (2005) points out, in order not to lose any important information of the hand-written compositions, in the electronic versions the spelling and grammar, as well as line breaks, titles or highlighted aspects such as capitalization, underlined sentences or margins and spacing, were maintained.

After computerizing and organizing the data, the different short stories written by the forty participants were analysed following criteria described in Martín Úriz et al. (2005), in terms of organization (macrostructure), fluency (number of words), complexity (including both an analysis of degree of subordination and analysis of lexical variety and lexical density) and accuracy (percentage of correct clauses).

In order to analyse the macrostructure of the short stories, participants were given a mark depending on whether they followed the structure they had been taught (mark=10), they followed it partially (mark=5) or they wrote texts with a complete different structure (mark=0). This information is shown in the following table.

Table 2. Analysis of macrostructure

Mark	<i>Has the student/pair of students followed the macrostructure of a short story? (Setting &gt; rising action &gt; climax &gt; falling action &gt; solution)</i>
<b>0</b>	The student/pair of students has not followed the directions
<b>5</b>	The student/pair of students has followed some directions
<b>10</b>	The student/pair of students has followed all the directions

In order to analyse fluency, I counted the number of words of each story, the number of clauses –including both finite and non-finite clauses– and the number of T-units, considering as a T-unit each main clause with all the subordinate clauses attached to it.

Complexity was analysed in terms of lexical variation of the short stories (number of different words –including both content and function words– that appeared in each text), the lexical density of the written productions (which was calculated by measuring the proportion of the total number of content words with the total number of words in the text), the number of words per clause (in both finite and non-finite clauses) and the number of words per T-unit.

Accuracy was analysed in terms of percentage of correct clauses, considering as an incorrect clause any clause in which the student (control group) or pair (experimental group) had commit any type of error (grammatical error, vocabulary error, syntactic error, etc.).

The following table summarizes the way these four measures (organization, fluency, accuracy and complexity) were used for the quantitative study.

Table 3. Measures used for the quantitative study

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Fluency</i>	<i>Complexity</i>	<i>Accuracy</i>
Correct/partially correct/ incorrect structure of the short story	Number of words	Lexical variation (different words)	Percentage of correct clauses
	Number of clauses	Lexical density	
	Number of T-units	Number of words per clause (mean)	
		Number of words per T-unit (mean)	

#### 3.2.2.2. Observing engagement

In order to analyse how collaborative working affects students' engagement when writing texts in comparison to individual working, a small qualitative study based on observation was carried out as I was interested in the students' behaviour in order to evaluate possible use of collaborative writing in my future teaching. For this study, I took notes about everything I observed in both groups during the data collection regarding those aspects related to the students' attitude. I listened to the conversations held by students in order to see whether they were focused on the task, I observed how they tried to solve their doubts, as well as the different roles that students with lower levels of English and those with higher levels adopted in the pairs.

### 3.3. Data analysis & results

#### 3.3.1. Quality of written text

The following tables summarize the results of the quantitative analysis of the texts produced by the forty participants. Tables 4a and 4b summarize the results for the twenty participants who worked individually and Table 5 summarizes the results for the twenty participants who worked in pairs.

Table 4a. Quantitative analysis of texts produced by individual learners

CONTROL		S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10
FLUENCY	ORGANIZATION	10	0	10	5	5	10	0	5	5	5
	Number of words	186	101	201	84	70	329	102	69	273	246
	Number of clauses	28	16	33	12	16	50	14	13	40	39
	Number of T-units	20	11	24	11	13	47	12	10	20	29
	Lexical variation	110	73	122	66	45	175	59	50	118	156
	Lexical density	40%	41%	36%	48%	43%	39%	38%	46%	30%	43%
	Words per clause	6.6	7.6	5.9	7	4.2	5.1	6.4	4.8	6.3	6.5
	Words per T-unit	8.7	9.3	9.8	7.6	5.5	7.6	7.8	6.4	13.8	7.9
COMPLEXITY											
ACCURACY											
(% correct clauses)		57%	50%	87%	58%	25%	90%	43%	77%	67%	66%

Table 4b. Quantitative analysis of texts produced by individual learners

CONTROL		S11	S12	S13	S14	S15	S16	S17	S18	S19	S20
FLUENCY	ORGANIZATION	5	10	5	5	0	5	0	5	0	0
	Number of words	95	223	95	258	102	125	115	84	105	80
	Number of clauses	19	42	19	44	22	21	16	15	19	13
	Number of T-units	14	33	17	34	20	14	10	14	14	11
	Lexical variation	56	139	54	133	56	71	63	58	66	57
	Lexical density	38%	45%	37%	35%	35%	38%	33%	51%	39%	36%
	Words per clause	5.3	5.3	4.7	6.1	4.4	5.7	6.9	5	5.1	5.9
	Words per T-unit	7.4	6.7	5.2	8	4.8	8.6	11.3	5.6	7.1	7.1
COMPLEXITY	ACCURACY										
	(% correct clauses)	79%	76%	42%	61%	36%	33%	50%	93%	26%	69%

Table 5. Quantitative analysis of texts produced by pairs

EXPERIMENTAL		P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
FLUENCY	ORGANIZATION	10	5	10	10	5	5	5	5	10	5
	Number of words	174	116	217	161	88	190	163	104	156	138
	Number of clauses	31	20	40	28	13	36	26	17	26	24
	Number of T-units	28	12	33	22	11	31	17	17	18	22
	Lexical variation	109	63	106	92	55	119	75	65	82	90
	Lexical density	42%	31%	31%	39%	39%	34%	30%	44%	34%	45%
	Words per clause	5.6	5.6	5.1	5.5	6.8	5.5	6	5.7	5.6	5.5
	Words per T-unit	6.5	8.3	6.3	7.1	7.9	7.5	9.2	5.7	8.3	6
COMPLEXITY	ACCURACY										
	(% correct clauses)	80%	85%	87%	89%	92%	88%	69%	94%	85%	70%

In these tables, the results are distributed in horizontal block. The first row gives the marks for the structure of the texts. As mentioned above, the different marks given (10, 5 and 0) indicate if participants followed the structure they had been taught (mark=10), if they followed it partially (mark=5) or if they wrote texts with a complete different structure (mark=0). The second, third and fourth row show the number of words, clauses and T-units of text. The fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth row show the results of lexical variation (number of different words –including both content and functional words), lexical density (proportion of the total number of content words with the total number of words in the text), number of words per clause (in both finite and non-finite clauses) and number of words per T-unit. The last row shows the percentage of correct clauses of each text.

One important difference shown in these tables has to do with the macrostructures of the short stories. Table 5 show that four pairs followed the structure of a short story they were taught before the task (setting > rising action > climax > falling action > solution), and the other six pairs followed this structure partially (pairs P5 and P6, for example, did not finish their stories, so they did not include the two last stage; pairs P2, P7, P8 and P10, instead, did not divide the conflict into rising action, climax and falling action), but none of the pairs in the experimental group follow a complete different structure to the one they had been taught. On the other hand, Tables 4a and 4b show that six participants in the control group wrote texts with a complete different structure (participants S2, S7, S15, S17, S19 and S20).

These three tables also show that the texts written by participants who worked individually showed more variability (regarding the measures used for the quantitative analysis) than those texts written by pairs.

Regarding fluency, for example, in the control group there existed a great difference between the longest short story (329 words, written by participant S6) and the shortest one (69

words, written by participant S8). On the other hand, in the experimental group there is less difference between the longest story and the shortest one (217 words and 88 words, texts written by pairs P3 and P5 respectively). The higher difference in the control group (individuals) regarding the length of the texts meant that the number of clauses and T-unit varied more in this group than in the experimental group. The text with the highest number of clauses in the control group had 50 clauses (participant S6) and the one with the lowest number of clauses had 12 clauses (participant S4). On the other hand, the text with the highest number of clauses in the experimental group had 40 clauses (pair P3) and the one with the lowest number of clauses had 13 clauses (pair P5).

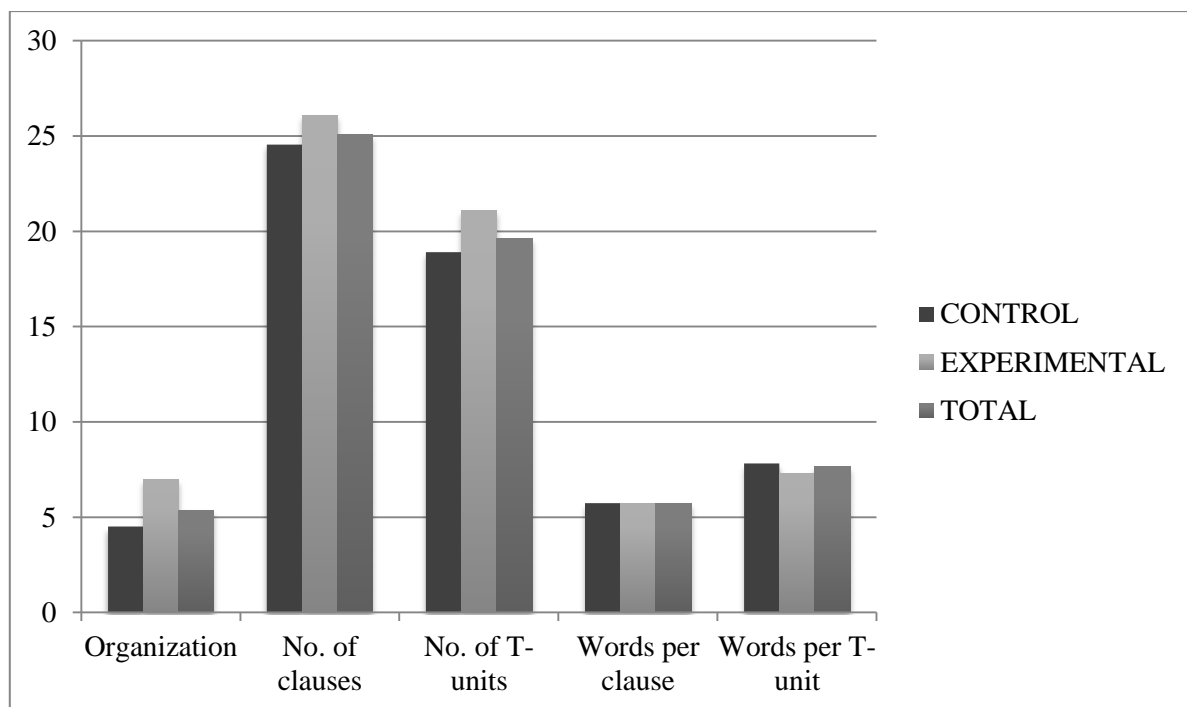
Accuracy is another measure which shows great differences between both groups. In the experimental group, the lowest percentage of accuracy was 69% (pair P7) and the higher percentage was 94% (pair P8), whereas in the control group the lowest percentage was 25% (participant S5) and the higher percentage was 93% (participant S8). This shows again greater differences among the texts written by individuals than among the texts written by pairs.

Regarding complexity (measured in terms of degree of subordination and analysis of lexical variety and lexical density) the results for both groups were similar. Tables 4a, 4b and 5 show that the percentages of lexical density were quite similar among the participants in each group, as well as among the forty participants involved in the present study. The lowest and the highest percentages in the control group were 30% and 51% respectively, very similar to the lowest and the highest percentages of lexical density in the experimental group, which were 30% and 45% respectively.

Table 6 shows the mean results for the different features analysed, as well as Graphs 1a and 1b, and the standard deviations for the results in each group.

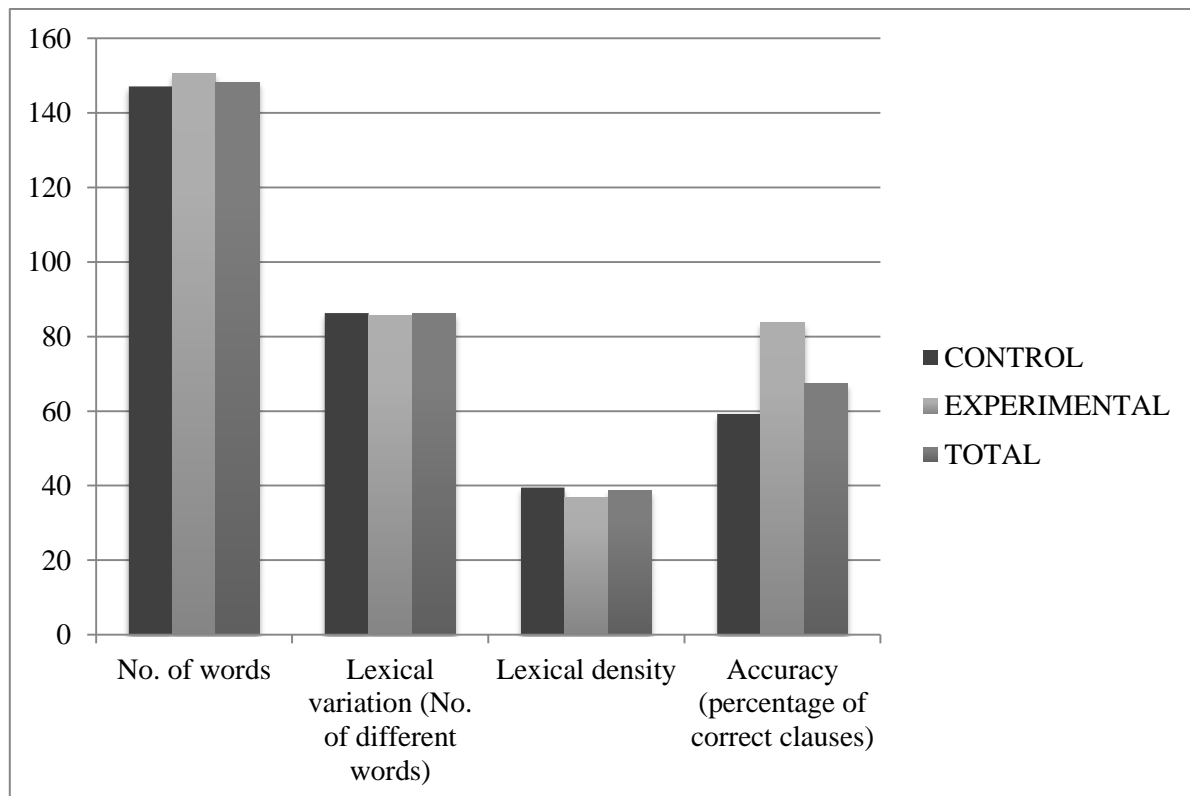
Table 6. Mean results and standard deviations in the quantitative analysis

		MEAN CONTROL	MEAN EXPER.	MEAN TOTAL	S.D. CONTROL	S.D. EXPER.
<b>ORGANIZATION</b>		4,5	7	5.33	3.59	2.58
<b>FLUENCY</b>	<i>Number of words</i>	147.15	150.7	148.33	79.68	39.79
	<i>Number of clauses</i>	24.55	26.1	25.06	12.18	8.27
	<i>Number of T-units</i>	18.9	21.1	19.63	9.94	7.58
<b>COMPLEXITY</b>	<i>Lexical variation</i>	86.35	85.6	86.1	40.14	21.44
	<i>Lexical density</i>	39.55%	36.9%	38.67%	5.2	5.62
	<i>Words per clause</i>	5.74	5.69	5.72	0.93	0.45
	<i>Words per T-unit</i>	7.81	7.28	7.63	2.13	1.15
<b>ACCURACY</b> (% correct clauses)		59.25%	83.9%	67.47%	20.89	8.52



Graph 1a. Mean results obtained in the quantitative analysis of texts

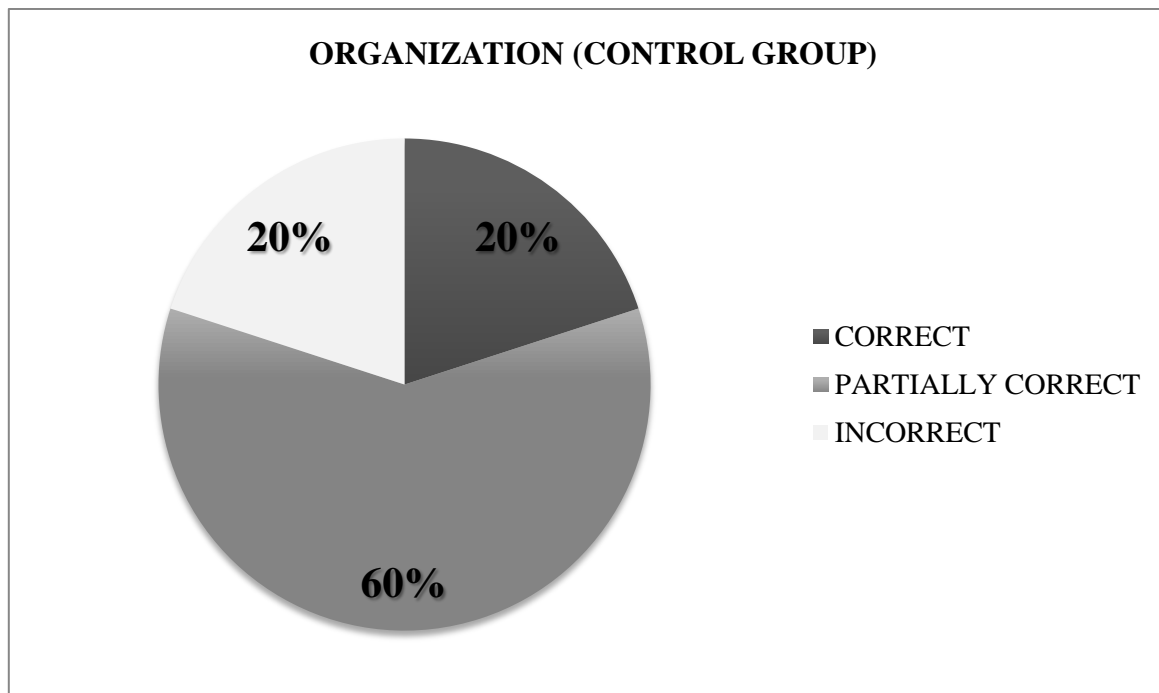




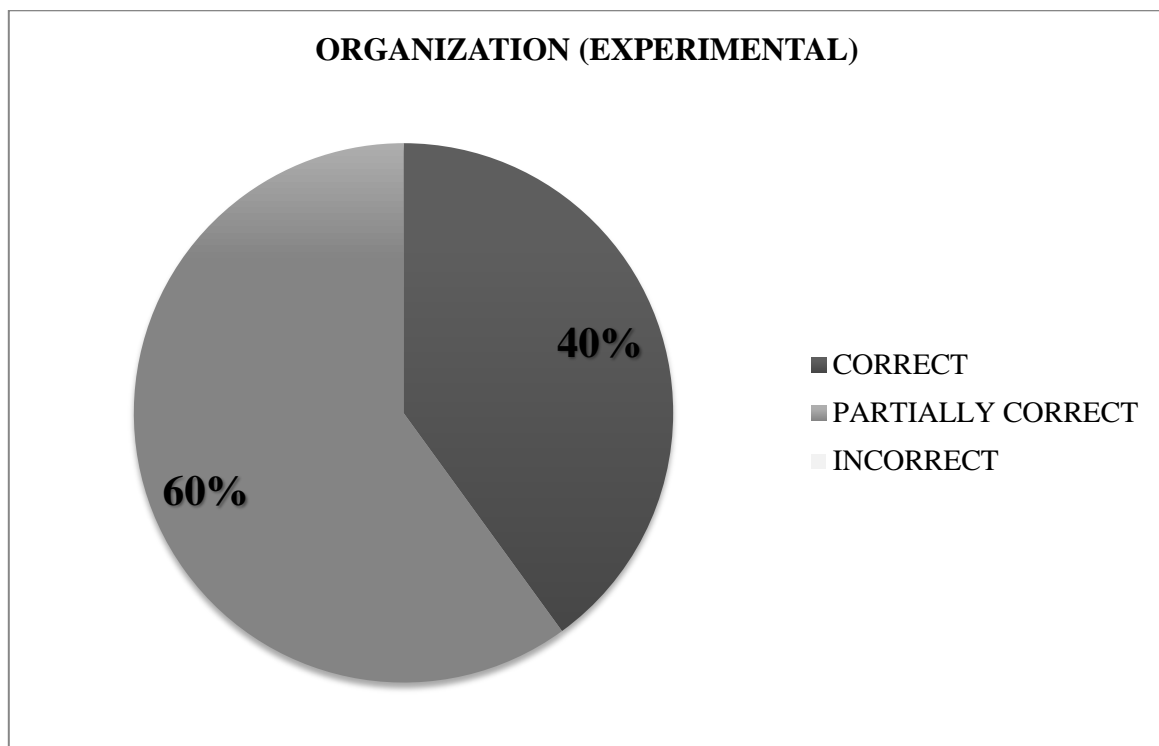
Graph 1b. Mean results obtained in the quantitative analysis of texts

Table 6, as well as Graphs 1a and 1b, shows that the most interesting differences between both groups regarding the mean results for the different features analysed in the quantitative analysis of the texts are related to organization and accuracy, measures in which pairs had better results than individuals.

In terms of organization (macrostructure), Table 6 shows that the structure of the short stories written by participants who worked in pairs was more correct than the structure of the short stories written by participants who worked individually. In order to analyse this difference in detail, pie charts 1 and 2 respectively show the percentage of students in each group who wrote texts with a correct structure, a partially correct structure or a complete different structure to the one they had been taught.



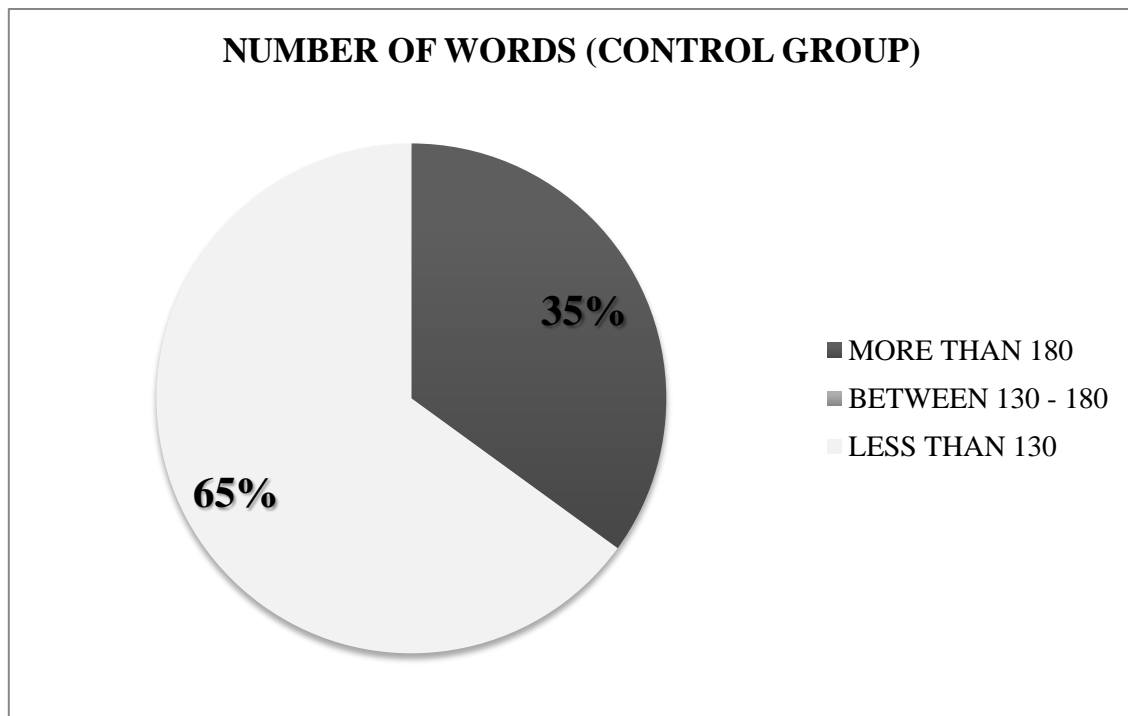
Pie chart 1. Distribution of text regarding macrostructure (control group)



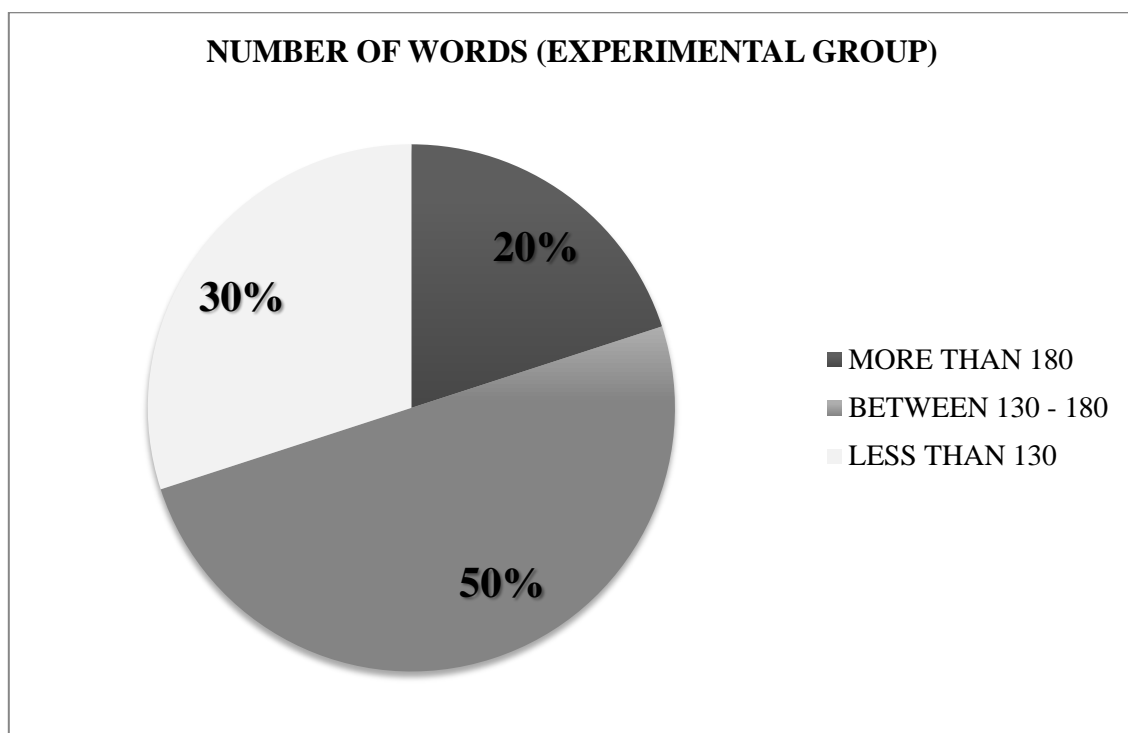
Pie chart 2. Distribution of texts regarding macrostructure (experimental group)

These two pie charts show that 60% of the texts produced by participants in both groups had a partially correct structure. However, the other 40% is distributed differently in each group. On the one hand, in the control group (individual learners) only 20% of the short stories had a completely correct structure (setting> rising action > climax > falling action>solution), whereas the other 20% of the stories had an incorrect structure. On the other hand, in the experimental group (pairs) the remaining 40% of the short stories showed a completely correct structure, so that none of the stories written by pairs had an incorrect structure.

Regarding fluency, Table 6 shows that the mean length of the text composed by individuals and the text composed by pairs was almost the same (an average of 147.15 words for individual learners and an average of 150.7 words for pairs). However, the larger standard deviation regarding number of words for texts written by individual learners (which is almost twice the standard deviation for pairs) suggests greater variation among individually composed texts. This can be more clearly seen in Pie charts 3 and 4. Pie chart 4 shows that texts produced by pairs were quite balanced regarding number of words (half of the texts were near the mean and the other half was almost equally distributed between texts with more words than the mean and texts with less words). On the other hand, Pie chart 3 shows that there existed high differences regarding number of words among texts written by individual learners (none of them was near the mean).

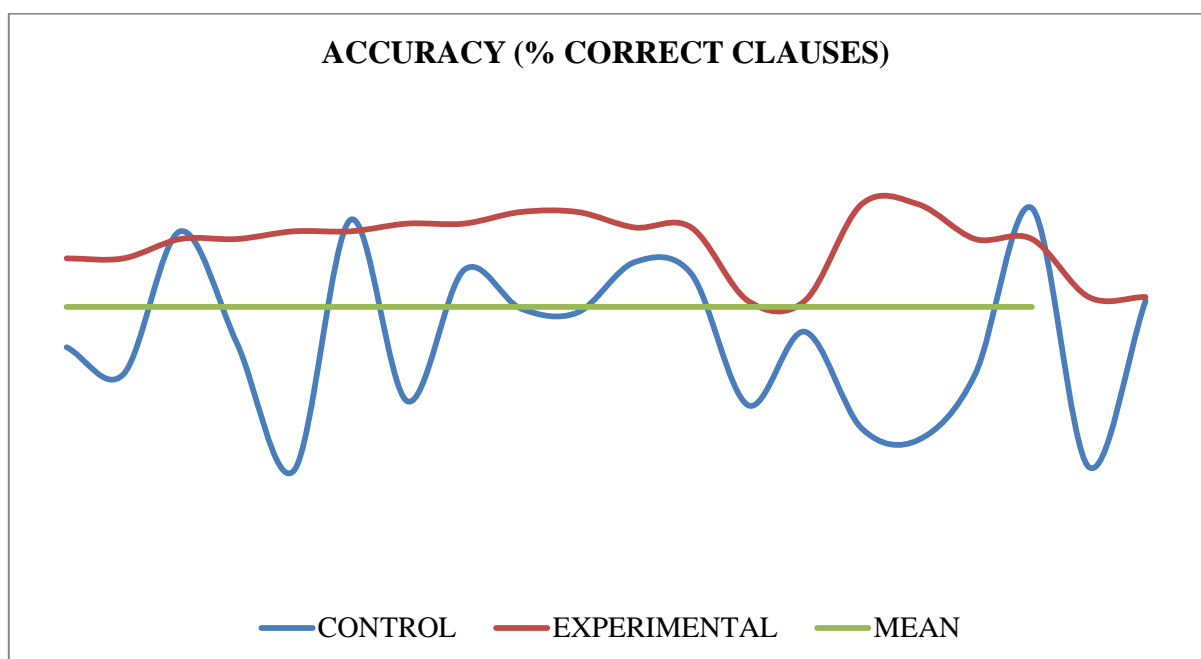


Pie chart 3. Distribution of texts regarding number of words (control group)



Pie chart 4. Distribution of texts regarding number of words (experimental group)

Regarding accuracy, Table 6 shows that texts written by pairs were more accurate than those written by individuals (59.25% of correct clauses in the texts written by individual learners opposite to 83.9% of correct clauses in texts written by pairs). This can be clearly seen in Line graph 1, which presents how the results for each group move away or come close to the total mean regarding accuracy.

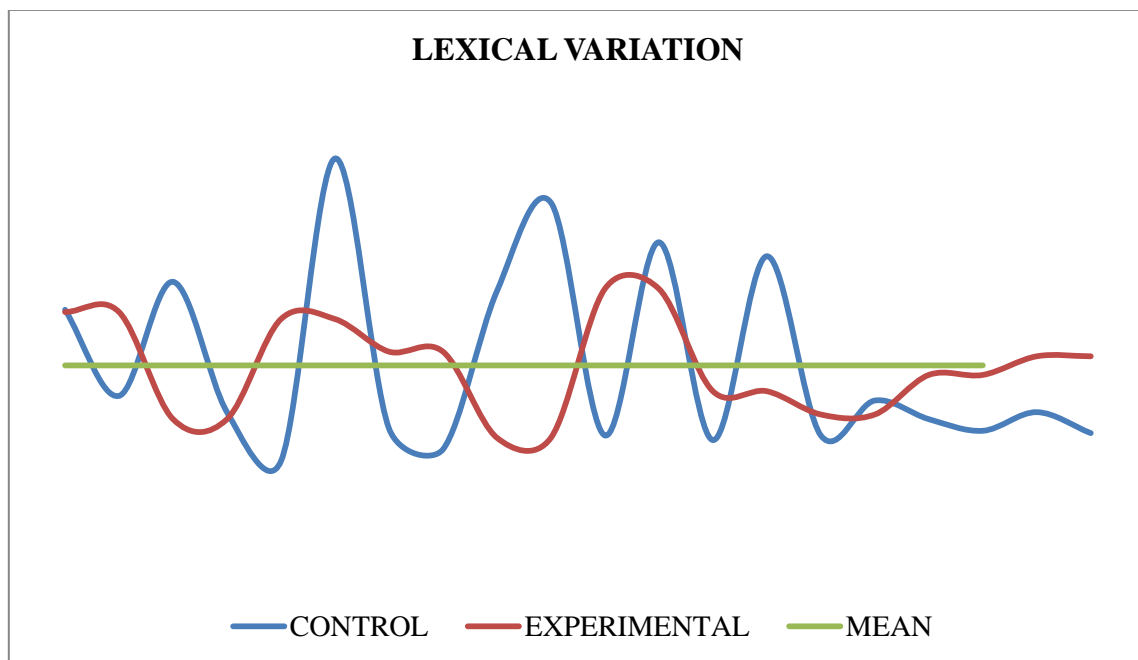


Line graph 1. Comparison of the results for each group with the total mean regarding accuracy

The red line (pairs) goes almost along the whole graph above the green line (mean), whereas the blue line (individuals) reaches more endpoints both above and below the mean, showing that pairs wrote more accurate texts.

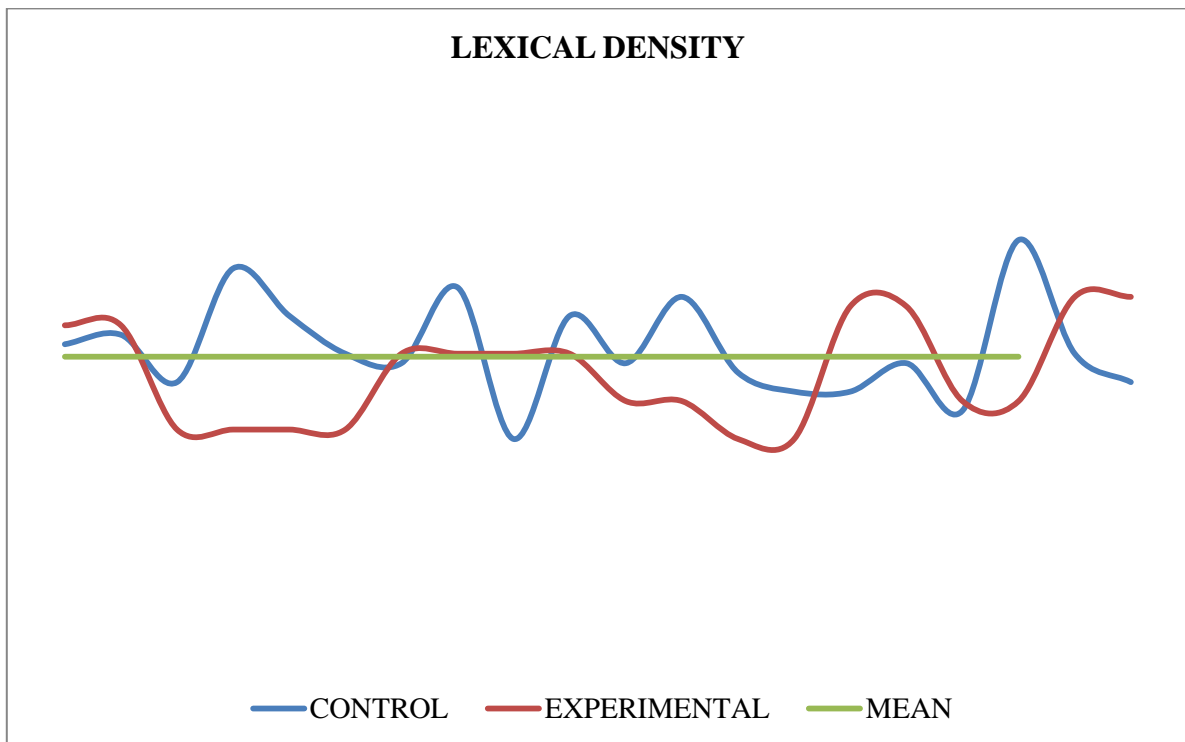
In terms of the measures I included in complexity, Table 6, as well as Graphs 1a and 1b, shows that there existed no significant differences between the texts produced by pairs and the texts produced by individuals as measured by the length of clauses and T-units, the

number of different words (lexical variation) and the proportion of the total number of content words with the total number of words in the text (lexical density). In the texts produced by individuals, the mean length of the T-unit (7.81 words) was almost the same than the mean in texts written by pairs (7.28 words). The mean results for lexical variation in the texts produced by individuals was 86.35 different words, which was only slightly higher than the mean results in the texts written by pairs, which was 85.6 different words. The mean results for lexical density were also similar in both groups (39.55% of lexical density in text written by individuals and 36.9% in text written by pairs). In Line graphs 2, 3, 4 and 5, which show how the results for each group move away or come close to the total mean regarding lexical variation, lexical density, mean number of words per clause and mean number words per T-unit, we can see again that, in terms of the measures I included in complexity, there existed no great differences between both groups.



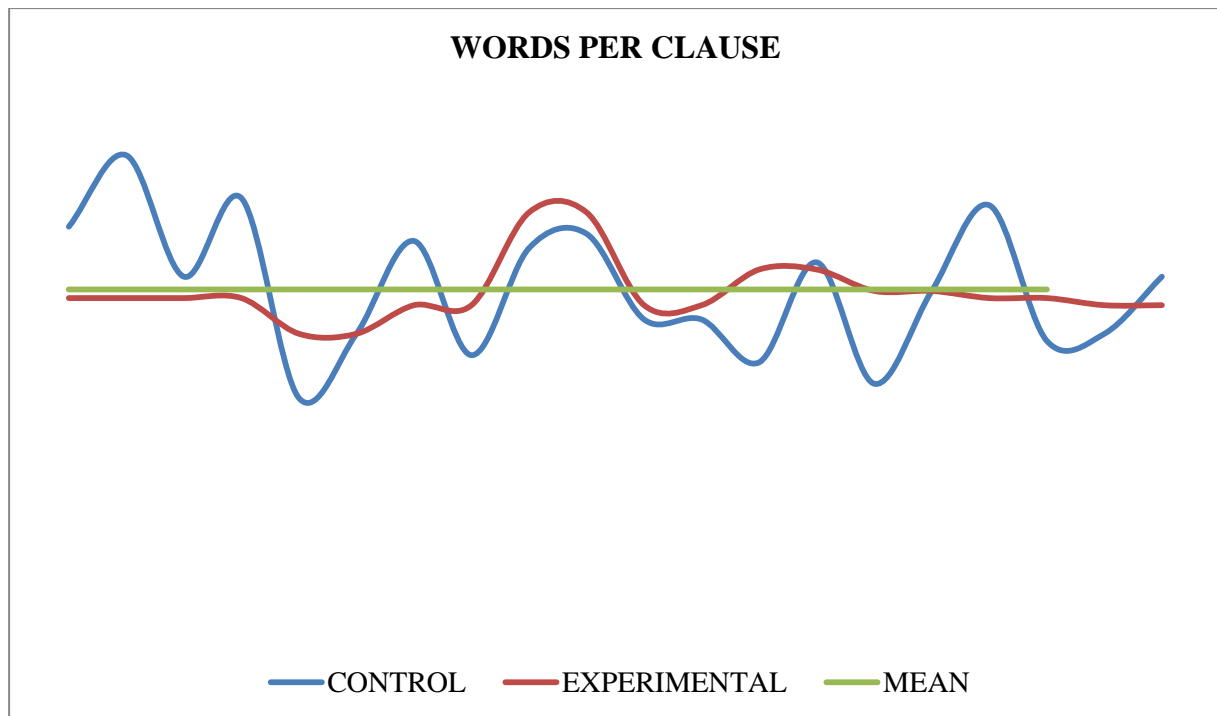
Line graph 2. Comparison of the results for each group with the total mean regarding lexical variation

Line graph 2, which shows the results for each group and the total mean regarding lexical variation, shows that both lines (blue=control group, red=experimental group) reach endpoints both above and below the mean, showing that results for both groups regarding lexical variation were similar.



Line graph 3. Comparison of the results for each group with the total mean regarding lexical density

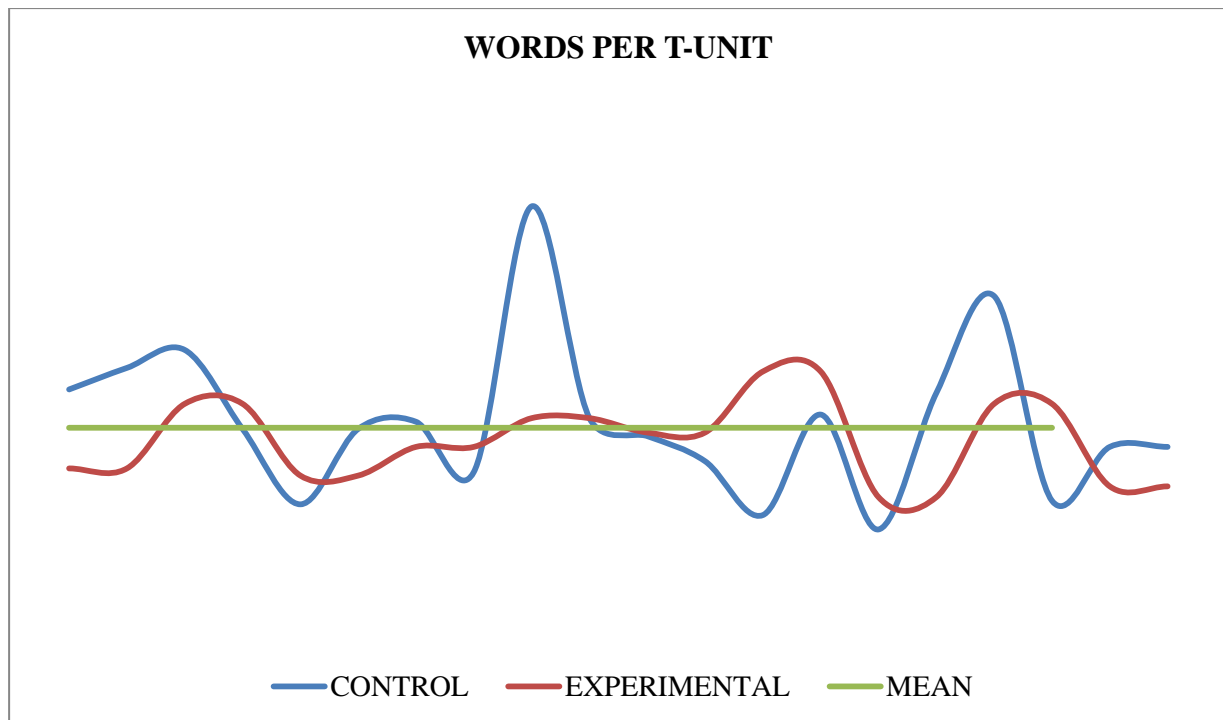
Line graph 3, which shows the results for each group and the total mean regarding lexical density, shows that both lines (blue=individuals; red=pairs) come close to the total mean and do not reach large endpoints, showing again similar results for both groups.



Line graph 4. Comparison of the results for each group with the total mean regarding number of words per clause

Line graph 4, which shows the results for each group and the total mean regarding number of words per clause, shows that the blue line (individuals) reaches more end points than the red line (pairs), which moves close to the total mean almost along the whole graph. However, the endpoints reached by the blue line are small, showing that there are not great differences between the results for each group regarding number of words per clause.





Line graph 5. Comparison of the results for each group with the total mean regarding number of words per T-unit

Line graph 5 shows similar results for both groups regarding number of words per T-unit. The blue line (individuals) only reaches two large endpoints and moves close to the total mean, as well as the red line (pairs) along the rest part of the graph.

Although the results for the measures included in complexity are similar in both groups, the standard deviations of the results in the control group (individuals) were larger than the standard deviations in the experimental group (pairs), in general almost twice in the control group than in the experimental group, as shown in Table 6. This means that the set of texts produced by pairs was more balanced than the set of texts produced by individuals, a fact which shows that mixed ability groups help students with a lower level.

### **3.3.2. Engagement**

The observations and reflections carried out during data collection in both groups (observations to the conversations between students during the task, to the roles adopted by each student in the different pairs and number of questions asked by students to the teacher) show that students who worked in pairs seemed to pay more attention and effort to what they had to do than students who worked individually. Observations to the conversations held by students during data collection showed that participants who worked in pairs talked to their partners about the task almost all the time, whereas some participants who worked individually stopped writing to talk about other issues many times during the thirty minutes they had to write their story. Moreover, participants who worked individually tended to ask more questions to the teacher during the elaboration of the task than those who worked collaboratively. Pairs, on the contrary, tended to try to solve their doubts by discussing with their partner.

Another important difference I was able to notice was that those students with a lower level of English (according to their grades in English Language) who worked together with a student with a higher level of English were more involved in the elaboration of the task than those students with a lower level of English who had to work on their own. This was noticeable in the fact that in the experimental group (pairs) students with lower levels of English tried to contribute with ideas and help their partners in the elaboration of the written task, whereas students with lower levels of English in the control group (individuals) were those participants who spent the whole time talking about other issues instead of focusing on the task. This probably explains the fact that almost all the texts written by pairs had the same length (number of words) whereas texts written by individual learners showed clear

differences regarding this feature, having been written by participants with lower levels of English most of the texts with less number of words.

#### **4. Discussion**

Results consistent with the findings of the present study show both similarities and differences with the findings presented by Storch (2005). As mentioned in the theoretical background, in her study Storch compared texts written by pairs with texts written by individuals in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency, and found that participants who had worked in pairs had produced “shorter but better texts in terms of task fulfillment, grammatical accuracy, and complexity” (Storch, 2005, p.153). The findings of the present study, however, show that collaborative writing had especially positive effects on organization and accuracy, but not on complexity.

Students who worked in pairs seemed to pay more attention to the instructions given by the teacher regarding the way they had to organize their short stories. This can be seen in the fact that 40% of the texts written by pairs had a complete correct structure and none of them had an incorrect structure, whereas only 20% of participants who worked individually wrote texts with a correct structure and another 20% wrote texts with a complete different structure.

Results regarding accuracy are the most striking ones. Texts written by pairs were much more accurate than those written by individuals, since almost all texts in the experimental group (80%) had a percentage of accuracy superior than 70%, whereas only 30% of the texts in the control group were in this range. These results are consistent with the findings shown by Fernández Dobao (2012). For her study, Dobao compared the performance of the same writing task by groups of four learners, pairs and individual learners and

examined the effect of the number of participants on the fluency, complexity, and accuracy of the written texts produced. She found that participants who work on collaboration (both in pairs and groups of four learners) produced more accurate texts. The higher percentages of accuracy in the texts written by pairs in the present study may be related to the fact that collaborative working let students share their knowledge and give immediate feedback to their partners, something also pointed out by Storch (2005).

Regarding fluency, the results of the present study contrast with the results obtained by Storch (2005) as well as with the results obtained by Wigglesworth and Storch (2009). As mentioned above, in her study Storch (2005) found that pairs wrote shorter texts than individuals. Wigglesworth et al. (2009), who also carried out a study in order to analyze the differences in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency between partner and individual texts, found that collaborative writing did not present benefits for students in terms of fluency, but it did present positive effects in terms of complexity and accuracy.

The present study, instead, found that the mean length of the text composed by individuals and the text composed by pairs was almost the same. However, there were greater variations among individually composed texts. Almost all the texts written by pairs were near the mean length. On the other hand, texts written by individuals were far from the mean length, both above and below it. Taking this into account, the findings shown by Storch (2005) and Wigglesworth et al. (2009), which pointed out that pairs produced shorter texts coincide only partially with the findings of the present study.

Regarding the qualitative analysis of EFL students' observed engagement when writing texts, the findings of the present study are quite different from Storch's discussion of her own experience but similar to the results of her study. Storch (2005) affirms that "despite the support in research literature for collaborative writing, as a language teacher, I have often

noticed that when I ask students to work in pairs (or small groups) on tasks which require written output, some students seem reluctant to do so. They seem to prefer to complete such tasks individually” (Storch, 2005, pp. 154-155).

However, after carrying out her study, Storch (2005) points out that in the interviews she had with the participants in her study, almost all the participants showed a positive attitude to collaborative writing. Only two students said that they considered that collaborative working should be used for other type of activities, mainly oral activities such as group discussions. Storch (2005) asserts that “of those that found the experience positive, the predominant reason given (by 12 students) was that it provided them with an opportunity to compare ideas and to learn from each other different ways of expressing their ideas” (Storch, 2005, p.166).

My own experience regarding participants’ engagement during data collection was very similar to Merkle’s (2013). As Merkle points out, during data collection I observed that, in general, students who worked collaboratively in pairs paid more attention an effort to the task than those who worked individually. Most conversations between students who were working in pairs were about the task itself, whereas some students who worked individually spent a lot of time talking about other issues. Moreover, students who worked individually asked the teacher for clarifications about vocabulary, length and structure much more frequently than pairs, who tended to try to solve these questions discussing between them.

Storch (2005) points out, “collaborative writing also afforded students the opportunity to give and receive immediate feedback on language, an opportunity missing when students write individually” (Storch, 2005, p. 168). In this way, by working collaboratively students can exchange ideas and opinions with another classmate, which may make students feel more

secure and comfortable and, therefore, pay more attention and effort to the writing task, obtaining better results than if they worked alone.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study analysed how collaborative working affects EFL student's quality of written text and their engagement when written texts in comparison to individual working. Regarding the first research question presented at the beginning of this paper ("Does collaborative working increase the quality of EFL students' written text?") the findings of the present study were the following ones:

1. Students who work collaboratively in pairs tended to organize more their text (in terms of macrostructure).
2. Groups of students working collaboratively in pairs produced more balanced text in terms of fluency than groups of students working individually.
3. Collaborative working did not present special positive effects in complexity, as measured in terms of degree of subordination and analysis of lexical variety and lexical density.
4. Students who work collaboratively in pairs produced much more accurate texts than students who work individually.

Regarding the second research question presented at the beginning of this paper ("Does collaborative working increase EFL students' observed engagement when writing texts?") the findings of the present study were the following ones:

1. Students who work collaboratively in pairs tended to focus more on the written task than those who worked individually.

2. Collaborative writing promoted peer feedback, since students who work in pairs tended to try to solve their doubts by asking their partners instead of asking the teacher.
3. Collaborative writing, in general terms, increased EFL students' observed engagement when writing texts. It especially affected students with lower levels of English, since those who worked collaboratively with a student with a higher level of English paid more attention and effort to the written than those who worked on their own.

Future research could expand on this topic, seeing the effect of collaborative writing on text structure, accuracy and engagement.

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## Appendix 1

### Model of short story

#### Tomorrow Has Been Cancelled

The rain pelted down, flooding the streets. Nicolson could feel the cold water soaking through his socks as he tried to walk faster. He could see Jarrett just ahead. The man was walking stooped over, oblivious to the fact that he was being followed. Nicolson increased his pace to draw closer and pulled out his gun from his jacket. Jarrett's feet slapped against the sodden pavement. He must have finally sensed he wasn't alone. He glanced back over his shoulder and saw first Nicolson and then the black shape in his right hand. Jarrett froze as the gun got closer to him. Nicolson blinked trying to see clearly through the incessant rain and cursed as the other man started running. Nicolson started running too, thinking that he should have put his trainers on that morning. Jarrett skidded on the slippery concrete and fell down to the ground with his arms flailing out in front of him to break his fall. His face was a mask of pain. Nicolson was on him in seconds pinning him to the ground and squeezing the gun under his chin.

SETTING  
CHARACTERS

CONFLICT  
RISING ACTION

'You should have paid me my share when you had the chance, Pete.'  
'It's all just a big misunderstanding Ray, I swear. On my mother's life, I was going to give it to you.'

'Where is it?'

Rain run down Jarrett's face making it look like he was weeping buckets.

'I don't have it on me now. It'll take me a bit of time to get the cash together. I can give you it tomorrow.'

Nicolson had heard enough. Jarrett had taken him for a mug once already. He wasn't going to give him the opportunity to do it again.

CONFLICT  
CLIMAX

'Tomorrow has been cancelled,' he said and pulled the trigger.

CONFLICT  
FALLING ACTION  
SOLUTION

## **Appendix 2**

### **Control group - Texts written by individuals**

#### Student 1 (S1)

It was raining. Nobody was in the street, just Nicole. It was seven o'clock in the afternoon, she was going to the supermarket for bought some bread. When she arrived there, she realise it was Sunday and for that reason the supermarket was closed. She went to another two places for bought bread, but all of them were also closed. Finally she decided to go back to home. She continou being the only person at the street or that what she thought. Although it wasn't real she continou walking. Three minutes later, when she was very close to her house, someone kidnapped her, taking her to a little street where she was at first violated and after this, the man take out of his jacket a gun. Nicole, knowing what it will hapend she tried to scream and go out of the criminal hands; but all their efforts didn't get any solution. So the kidnapper with out losing more time, holding the gun near her head, pulled the trigger and Nicole died. Three days later, the police found the criminal and took him to the jail.

#### Student 2 (S2)

Ms. Rooney was sitting reading calmed the newspaper in her castle when she received an anonymus call:

“We have hijacked your hamster, you can change it for 3.000.000€, we will call in 1 hour to get the money”.

Ms. Rooney was hysterical without no idea about what he can doing to solution this problem. She tryed to warn to the police calling at their comisary but they think it was a joke and they didn't do nothing.

The housewife of the castle heard Ms. Rooney craying and she asked what was the problem and she tells him all thas was happened.

(Incomplete story)

Student 3 (S3)

It was a cold ice tea.

I was listening to Sirvamieston. Outside, it was raining cats and dogs. The storm was wild.

While Sirvamieston was talking, my mind goes to the day I joined the game, this awful game we have been playing for a week. “A game for persons that are looking for a REALLY exciting experience”, that’s what the add said. When we arrived to the villa, we didn’t know that “REALLY exciting” wanted to mean that if you stay alive, you’re really lucky. All the doors were blocked. In our rooms, we found notes that told us who we were in the game: new personalities, new lives. At the end of the note, it said: “DOING THIS YOU CAN (MAYBE) STAY ALIVE, good luck”. And that was all, till this morning. There was a new note stuck in the mirror: “KILL ONE OF THEM, OR ONE OF THEM WILL KILL YOU”. That was so clear. It has been difficult to find the moment, but Sirvamieston is here, with me, and we are alone. He has been crying for at least one hour, telling me that he’s afraid, and that he wants to go back home. He trust me.

Student 4 (S4)

It was the 13<sup>th</sup> of February, a dark and cloudy Friday. Brock was waiting for his usual client, know as Pochyena.

“He must have had some trouble” Brock thought. Through the Fog, Brock saw. Four big shapes had appeared begining of the alley. When they got in front of him, they spread and Chucky was recognized by Brock.

“You shouldn’t have taken me for a mug, stupid camel.”

“What are you talking about? I was my best quality product.”

Chucky was getting worked up.

Student 5 (S5)

It's a beautiful day and Paquito stay in the park. He have got a big dog so he walk very much. Suddenly the dog dies.

Paquito it was a surprised because he didn't stand why his dog has died. He call the police.

The police come and investigated the case.

Finally paquito realised that his dog has die because he didn't fed his dog.

paquito cry because he have remorse.

Student 6 (S6)

Orwell woke up, he was dizzy and he felt strange. He was in an empty room full of white lights. He couldn't remember anything, but he knew that he must have been kidnapped. All of a sudden, two men entered the room. They were dressed in a striped blue and black suit and they had gas masks too. Orwell tried to woke up and fight but he was so downcast that he couldn't move. They came closer and gave him an injection, maybe two. Then, he suddenly felt so tired and sleepy and his eyes closed.

Perhaps he slept for hours, maybe days or even weeks but when he opened his eyes he was sittted down on a blue chair and tied. The rough ropes were irritating his wrists. He couldn't move. Orwell shouted, he was really hysterical because he wasn't able to do anything.

The floor opened a meter away from his feet and a screen appeared from the ground and a big black screen appeared. A man figure appeared and started to talk.

- Hi, George – Orwell could feel the rage and hate in his voice – Do you remember me?

Orwell knew him but he couldn't recognise him. He may have gone with him to school or perhaps he might have met him in one of the University parties.

- Oh, so I see you can't recognisme. This can't be happening. You destroyed my life. You made me hate myself. Do you really need me to tell you every little thing you did against me?

Without an awnser a video was being played on that big screen. It was a party. A birthday party. Concretely the birthday party of George. He was turning seven that day. On a corner a little fat boy was crying. Orwell and two boys were laughing at him.

Suddenly a door opened behind him and that little boy, now an adult, entered the room with a knife and the chair turned red.

Student 7 (S7)

The sun was shinny in the street. Tom is going to buy very cold water at a restaurant and then he decided to called his mother that was in the airport because he was been in Italy for one week. Tom went to the airport and he could see his mother sit on a sit, she was tired and sad because he didn't see his son since two weeks. Then something happened a man with a black jacket and starts to shot on the airport. Suddenly the man took mother's Tom, Tom was scared and afraid because he didn't find his mother.

(Incomplete story)

Student 8 (S8)

The moonlight entered through the window while I was lying on the bed. I was texting my friend Kate. My family had gone to my grandparents house, I would be alone for three hours. Suddenly I heard a noise downstairs, that scared me. Then I went to the corridor and I realised that the window was opened. I listened the noise again.

- Mom? Dad? Who's there?

Nobody answered.

(Incomplete story)

Student 9 (S9)

The 8<sup>th</sup> of November in 1988 John Smith and his wife Alice Tomlinson were to a village that is next to Texas and it didn't seems very sure.

They arrieved at 8:00 pm and it was very dark there, but they found without any problem the house where they were to sleep. An old man gave them the key of their room which is the number 666 and Alice didn't like that because it was the devil's number.

The next morning when they woke up they went to visit the village and in a restaurant they meet a woman who told them that if they saw a little kid, with a red T-shirt, a cap and glasses called her because he was kidnap the last week there and the police was trying to found him

but he didn't appear. When they went out of the restaurant they saw the man who gave them the key of the room the day before and next to him was a kid that wore the same clothes that the woman said and they saw that the man was trying to enter in a car with the kid, Alice and John started to run to call the woman but when they came to the place where the man and the kid were they saw the kid with a gun in his hands and he had just shot the man.

Finally his mum ran to hug him and the little kid explained her that if he didn't shoot him, now he was hijacked. Alice and John were without words and they decided to go to another more calm place.

#### Student 10 (S10)

At last is the first of July. My family and I are getting prepared to go to London. Maybe there it's cold so I've caught the scarf which my grandmother knitted. I would rather being more days in the UK but we'll only stay there seven nights.

While I'm looking for my seat in the plane, some weird sounds start, my dad said me it's normal, so I don't care a lot. I forgot my headphones in the car but my sister has spare ones. Low battery, I can not say that I'm a lucky person. When we arrive to London have passed two hours and now it's 11 pm. After thirty minutes in front of us it's the hotel, the first thing I do when I see the buffet is drink some sparkling water. Third floor, room 256. My mom gets the card to enter into the room but... -Disable acces- Again, now the door is open.

In the morning I was astonished, someone came in at midnight and opened our luggage because my iPad which was in my suitcase wasn't there. The money for the trip, was other thing we couldn't find. We checked out two times. Indeed there was any money. Where's mom? Then she appeared getting into the room. She was in the hall talking with the receptionist, she was the one who took the money to save it in a better place!!

So well, let's get prepared to see the Big Ben.

Student 11 (S11)

Jack went to a friend house who was traveling. He had to water the plants and to saw that everythis was ok. Jack entered in the house. While he was entering, he felt something strange. He felt like if someone was watching at him. Jack entered in the living room. It was all right. After that he went to the kitchen and saw a big piece of bread on the floor. Suddenly he heard a noise that came from the bedroom, he went to theit and found another piece of bread. Jack started to feel

(Incomplete story)

Student 12 (S12)

SHANON.

Shanon felt that she didn't know anything. As she ran desperately throw the airport, hundreds of questions were appearing into her mind. She didn't want to weep, she shouldn't have weeped.

Shanon glanced around, panicking. She needed the answers, she knew she couldn't have survived without the answers. Where was detective Murphy? The airport was full of sleepy people. Shanon didn't notice, but it was 3 a.m. Hysterically, she screamed the name of the man who had the answers.

Suddently, she felt a hand pressing into her mouth.

`Don't yell!' whispered John Murphy into her ear.

Shanon turned around as she left her hands into the detective's shoulders.

`John, I need to know' she said, moaning and sighing. `I need to know who killed my husband'.

Detective John's face turned downcast. His soul was full of sorrow and his heart was a bunch of pain. He look directly at Shanon's blue eyes.

`Shanon, your husband hit you. You have been mistreated during 20 years. God, I remember that time when he broke your arm' he said. `Last week, when you entered into your house, you found him hitting your little child. You send her with her grandmother immediately. 15 minutes later, your husband was dead.'

Shanon shook her head, downcast.

`Make your own suppositions' finished John as he walked into his plane's platform.



Student 13 (S13)

It was a night of 1985, Tom was in his house watching the TV while a noise in the kitchen scared him. Tom jumped out of the chair and enter in the kitchen, noneone was there. A glass have falled down and make the noise. We return watching while the lights turn off. A noise was in her bedroom, then going down stairs and it became closer to him, but the lights turned on and the noise stoped. He ran away, out of the house. The noise was followed him. He stopped and glanced back.

(Incomplete story)

Student 14 (S14)

When I was Young, 14 years, I lived in Bronx, New York. I played very good basketball, on the neighbor there was a man that help boys to go out of there like a player.

One day this man, George, invited me to his house to talk about my future. When I was there at first he was a gentleman with me he trained me and took of me like a father do. I loved him, he was my heroe, but suddenly something changed.

He started to be closer to me and kissed me several time as the same time as he was touching me in a sexual form.

Some weeks after, he invited me to the lake and ordered me to swim in the lake without clothes. He was my heroe, so I did it inmediately, but something happened because he got closer to me and raped me. When it finished, he tried to kill me be drawn me but I could scaped.

For this time, he did it a lot of times more but I didn't tell someone because I thought it was good.

When I grew up, I became an FBI agent in the group of criminal behaviar because I didn't want any children have to lived the same as me.

Today, I am again in the Bronx because someone killed several boys. I know is he but now I need to get the cludes and be face to face with him to say George all.

I am Derek Morgan, and this is my story.

Student 15 (S15)

It's 12:00 and it's too hot in the park. In front of the park is a bank said Sam Wilson.

Really? I don't realised said Walden Smith.

Yes, there is a bank and now it's open, why don't we robbe it? said Sam Wilson.

I don't know? because it's a crime may be said Walden Smith. Sam Wilson stand up and go to a shop gun. He buy it one while Walden Smith is still in the park. When Sam Whilson bought the gun run to Walden Smith. They decided to robbe the bank. They enter there and put the gun to the...

(Incomplete story)

Student 16 (S16)

Was a sunny day of July when Thomas was with his son, in the park. He stayed sitting next to a women very pretty. He began to talk with Sophie when suddenly realise that his son don't stay in the park.

"Someone must have hijacked their" said Thomas hysterical. He went to the police and went with Sophie to search his son.

Someone have been called to Thomas. He take a call on the phone and the oder person said that if he don't took all the money he kill his son.

He worry go to the bank and get money but while their go to the place that he hang out with their, he found his son dead.

Finaly the police arreste the hijacker.

Student 17 (S17)

It was a bad day. Pedro walked in the street to go a cafe all day with a friend called Juan. In the cafe the two friends were talking about his holidays. Then Pedro said to his friend Juan “sorry but I should go to my job” then pedro left the cafe and Juan stayed in the cafe. While pedro were going to his job somebody caught him and put it him in a car. He is in a hijacked. The kidnnap take him to a negleted building and he said “you are going to stay here when I get the ransom and then I send a SMS to somebody in a mobile without GPS

(Incomplete story)

Student 18 (S18)

Terrie couldn't sleep. It was cold inside the hotel and she wasn't able to close her eyes for more than ten minutes. Her meeting with Mr. Smith next morning was worrying her. She changed her position, drank water, turned on and off again the lights and finally sighed, resigned. Her eyes were red and she couldn't stop listening to the sound of the clock, the sound of time, time she couldn't lose. She swallowed, but her throat was dry. She got up and opened

(Incomplete story)

Student 19 (S19)

The rain are very cold. Lisa could feel the acle, she don't deserve this she has a awful past, her family abandoned when she was a baby now she work in a restaurant she is the waitress. All the days she get up at 8:00 o'clock and go to work, but one day in the night she close the restaurant and when she go to her house, she saw a truck and Lisa start running but then Leonardo that is in the truck , grab Lisa. The next day the people saw the body of Lisa and anybody have idea that what happen with Lisa.

Student 20 (S20)

One day of the summer my family and I went to the restaurant.

The restaurant was small and beautiful.

1 hour later we saw the man. He must have be the person who killed my friend Joe. Because my mother saw the man before my friend died.

I called the police as soon as possible.

15 minutes ago the police were coming and arrest the burglar.

I'm so happy but I miss Joe so much.

He was a beautiful person.

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Experimental group - Texts written by pairs**

##### Pair 1 (P1)

It was a cold winter night. Alice was running down the streets, holding her baby. He was sleepy.

She was really afraid. She could feel him near, almost there. Appalled, she saw a shadow. “I should have stayed at home”, she thought, but she had decided that it was the moment to escape. Apparently, it has failed.

In that moment, she felt a hand on her face. There was a wet handkerchief on her mouth. Her last thought was that she doesn’t deserve it. Then, she fainted.

She woke up with pain on her wrist, she has chains. But the worst of all was that her baby wasn’t with her. A man entered in the room, really indignant and angry, he was wearing a police uniform. “We’ve caught” he said.

-Where’s my baby?! She screamed with tears on her eyes.

-Shut up! You’ll never see him again. He is going to go back with his parents. And now, you should get ready for jail.

Then he went out of the room, letting her alone.

##### Pair 2 (P2)

It was a dark day on February. Mike was walking on the street at night, when a man came to him and he asked for the time. However, his real intention was to mug Mike. Mike suspected of his intention when the man came to him, because the mugger looked like a criminal and he was right.

But something that the mugger didn’t know was that Mike was a policeman and he had a gun in his pocket and they started fighting. While they were fighting the gun was shot by one of them with the bad luck that the shot hit the policeman Mike and kill him.

And the mugger started to run and disappear.

Pair 3 (P3)

It was a rainy dark day in Madrid. Jack was walking through Gran Vía. Jack was on his way to his house. He turned a street, but someone was hiding and hit him and tried to kidnap him. Jack ran away and tried to find someone who could help him. In another street he found a boy. The boy asked him:

- Do you need help? Why are you running?

-Yes, please. A man is trying to kidnap me. He is running behind me.

-If you want, you can enter in my house. Maybe he won't find you here.

The kidnapper saw them entering in the house and he tried to come in hitting the door. The man who helped Jack called the police. While he was calling, the kidnapper was hitting the door. Jack and the man hid in a room because the other man almost had broken the door, and they kept silence. The kidnapper broke the door and started searching them. When the police sirens started to sound, the kidnapper ran away and the police came in time and caught him. Jack said "thank you" to the man that helped him, and he came back to his house. The kidnapper was arrested by the police and he had been for 4 years in prison.

Pair 4 (P4)

I was created with a mix of chemists liquids. The person who made me was a dark man. He worked with toxic liquids and I was his perfect thing to resolve a problem he had. It was a rain day with storms and lightnings.

I remembered he was nervous and afraid when he put me in his pocket. We went to Mery's house and we waited in her garden for the exactly moment. She was sleeping. She must have got to bed early. He knew that she was tired because she had participated in a run competition. He entered in the house and went upstairs quietly. Her son was sleeping too.

When he took me to introduced me into her body her son woke up and saw all. He was a witness of the crime. He started shouting. He may have been appalled but the crime was done. I was created for that. The life of a poison is very short.

Pair 5 (P5)

Joy was in the air, people must have had a good time. Joe and Megan were going to get married. Things were not going in the good way. I saw a strange man in the church, he was looking to all the guests in the wedding, and he was wearing sunglasses.

When we were in the dinner, this strange man was in our table, he didn't speak so much. Suddenly, he got up to the bathroom and I notice that Megan wasn't in her table with her husband.

(Incomplete story)

Pair 6 (P6)

I knew I was going to die in the moment I entered into that room. They had been waiting for me for too long. My entire body was trembling. I heard the door closing behind me and I sigh. I wasn't able to look at them.

"Did you do it?" asked Thomas, with his terribly soft voice.

"W-What?"

It was the scariest moment of my life. Anyway, it was going to end in a few moments.

"Did you do it, Bonnie? Did you kill her?" he repeated, calmly.

"Well, I..." I started to say.

"You, what?! You had the opportunity, Bonnie, I saw it!"

"Thomas, I..." I was close to cry at that moment. "I swear I tried to do it, but she..."

"You have demonstrated me you're not strong enough, Bonnie".

I suddenly looked into his eyes.

"What's the matter of having feelings?"

"I CAN'T BELIEVE" started to say Scott.

"Stop, Scott, it's not necessary to be rude with her. So... you say it's ok to have feelings, huh?" I nod. "Then, kill me".

I was appalled. What the hell did he mean?

"I'm not going to do that".

(Incomplete story)

Pair 7 (P7)

It was 1954, in a hotel of California. A crime was succeeded. One night, when all the people of the hotel were sleeping, an employer of the hotel woke up of his bed because he heard a noise in the kitchen of the hotel. He took a stick to protect him. When he was trying to get inside the kitchen, no one was in there. He turn back to his room, thinking that anything happened.

When he entered to his room, he saw that on his bed was blood and saw that was no electricity. So he went to the bathroom because he was thirsty. In the bathroom saw a black shape. The black shape was in the bath.

The employer looked at it and when he was trying to open the water, the black shape killed him with a knife.

The next morning the other employers saw that the employer was death. So no one of the hotel guess who killed him.

Pair 8 (8)

Iris was on her way to the bank. It was a hot morning so she took off her blue jacket. She needed cash to buy her best friend a birthday gift.

She entered to the bank. There wasn't many people queueing. She waited there. After a minute, a man with a mask on and he stood there. Suddenly, Iris heard people screaming. She looked behind and she saw the man holding a gun. Iris threw herself to the floor. Then she tried to take her phone to call the police but the burglar saw her and shot her. She shouldn't have taken the phone.



Pair 9 (P9)

It was a dark and cold night of winter. Mike and Emily were going to their car after watching a terror film on the cinema. Emily was scared and Mike was trying to calm her.

At 2 am they finally got home. Emily went to their bedroom and Mike to the sofa to watch the TV.

At 2:30 am Mike was called by his boss, who told him that he needed his help. So Mike told Emily that he had to go to his work.

At 5 am Emily was sleeping and heard a noise so she decided to see what was happening.

The noise came from the garage. Emily went to the kitchen and caught a knife. When Emily opened the door of the garage a shadow was coming to her and she attacked it with the knife.

When Emily turned on the light saw that the shadow was Mike, who had arrived from his work.

Pair 10 (P10)

It was a great night for going to walk outside. Jane decided to walk her dog with his friend.

They decided to meet in the park at nine o'clock but he didn't appear.

Jane was a bit angry with him, she could call him and ask why he didn't come but she didn't do it. "I will call him tomorrow, because I will be more relaxed".

Next morning Jane called his house and his mother answered that he didn't arrive, he went out at night but didn't come back home. Something strange was happening, Jane was worried because his best friend was missing. His parents called the police and started to look for him.

Two weeks later, someone found his dead body in a river, a group of gypsy people had stabbed him.

Jane cried a lot.